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THE DIAMOND RING,
OR,
The Astrologer's Stratagem.
A TALE OF BOSTON IN 1775.

BY OLIVER OPTIC.
(CONTINUED.)
CHAPTER IV.
The Murder.

"But, perhaps, Colonel, the body may be found," suggested Mr. Waldeck, looking into the face of the other with a blank expression. "It is possible, but not probable. The villain has probably made his escape, and it will be long before he will show himself again." "By Heaven! here he is!" said he, as he saw Robert Dewrie, apparently ignorant of the painful circumstances which the last hour had disclosed, enter the shop.

The young patriot certainly appeared to be entirely unconcerned and at ease. Nodding to Col. Powell, and with a word of salutation to Waldeck, he was about to pass into the back parlor, when the officer placed his hand upon his shoulder, and haughtily bade him stop. Robert Dewrie turned around, and with a scorn upon his finely chiseled features, was about to hurl his indignation at the Colonel, when the latter addressed him.

"Robert Dewrie, your crime has found you out!"

"Colonel Powell, I am not to be intimidated; you threatened me last night but you see I do not fear you," interrupted Robert.

"You are a scoundrel, I accuse you of a greater crime even than treason. You are a murderer!"

"No, no, Colonel, it cannot be true; I do not accuse him," interposed Mr. Waldeck.

"What cannot be true, Mr. Waldeck? I do not understand you," said Robert; calmly, but with an anxious glance of inquiry at the goldsmith.

"He knows nothing about it; I knew he was innocent—than that he is!" exclaimed Waldeck with apparent fervor.

Col. Powell looked with surprise at the goldsmith, while something like a sneer rested upon his countenance.

"Of course he will deny it. After all the pains he has taken to conceal the deed, he is not likely to inform against himself."

"Why what, sir? Will you tell me the meaning of all this?" said the young man with a gesture of impatience.

"Then you do not know your uncle has been murdered—basely, cruelly murdered?"

"Murdered! good Heaven! no!" exclaimed Robert.

"When and where was the deed done?"

"This pretended ignorance will not avail you, Robert Dewrie. The evidence already obtained, leaves no doubt as to the assassin," said Col. Powell sternly.

"My God! is it possible I am accused of the foul crime?"

"But, perhaps, Robert, you can remove the suspicion which attaches to you," mildly added Waldeck.

"God is my witness that I am entirely innocent!" exclaimed Robert, shrinking back at the horrid thought.

"You act your part well, young man," remarked the Colonel, whose prejudices had convicted the accused, rather than the suspicious circumstances.

"Colonel Powell, I believe you are a soldier and a gentleman. Recent events have unfortunately made you my enemy. You have in your rankling heart, already condemned me. Is this just? Is it generous? Can you not treat your foes with magnanimity?" and Robert Dewrie folded his arms in dignified composure, regarding with an eagle gaze the haughty man before him.

"Robert Dewrie," said the officer, after a momentary pause, "it is true you have attempted to injure me in a vital part, but I bear you no malice."

"It is false, sir; I have never attempted to injure you in any manner. I love your daughter, but the affection is mutual. I have not intruded myself upon her."

"It matters not now; it has already gone forth to your fellow citizens, as to your fellow patriots that you are a murderer."

"Which is false, sir," interrupted Robert, with an indignant flash of his bright eye.

"I am not your judge, but the evidence will consign you to the gallows and an everlasting infamy."

"Nay, my Colonel, let us not proceed to extremities with him," exclaimed Waldeck.

"Would you allow him to escape?" said Col. Powell with a glance of astonishment at the goldsmith.

"I would; but let us retire to the back parlor; the people will shortly interrupt us."

"I wish not to escape," said Robert calmly.

The three retired to the inner apartment where an examination of the merits of the case ensued. Robert was shown his own knife, covered with blood. He was horror-struck at the sight and protested his innocence. He had left it in the shop some days before, he said. He was next reminded of the quarrel, which certainly tended to implicate him. His absence since the quarrel was then commented upon. But this the young man vehemently denied, and appealed to Waldeck.

"Was I not in my room at seven o'clock last evening, Mr. Waldeck?" said he.

"I do not know that you were, Robert; if the fact can be shown, it would be greatly to your advantage," said Mr. Waldeck, in a gentle and persuasive tone.

"Did you not come to my room about that time?" exclaimed Robert, agitated with astonishment at the goldsmith's cool denial.

"Not that I remember, Robert," answered Waldeck with a sorrowful air.

"And did you not let me have a hundred pounds?"

"Why Robert you are demented; you had no money of me."

"My God! what can this mean?" and the young man pressed his hands on his swimming head.

Robert Dewrie was overwhelmed by this unexpected evidence of the treachery, of the criminal duplicity of Waldeck and for a time he endeavored to collect his scattered senses. A sudden thought inspired him with new energy, and more calmly than he had before acted, he examined his pockets for the purse handed him by Mr. Waldeck on the previous evening.

"Here are the purse and the money just as you gave them to me. Luckily I have not disturbed either." And Robert, extended the purse toward Waldeck.

"Now God be with you, Robert; this was your uncle's purse," exclaimed the goldsmith, as he took it from him. "Here are his initials."

Col. Powell examined the purse and recognized the letters.

"The evidence is conclusive," said he, re-

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turning the purse to Waldeck. "Our duty is plain." But Waldeck was unwilling to give the young man into the hands of justice, and while they were deliberating upon this point Robert by a hasty movement, made his escape from the house through the back door.

He had taken this step after a hasty but thorough examination of his position. The disturbed state of the colony had materially affected the administration of justice. Before a jury of loyalists he would have a small chance of his life. It was evident that Waldeck was conspiring against him; even while he was manifesting the deepest anxiety for his safety. The goldsmith's denial of the fact of lending him the money was sufficient to convince him of the existence of a deep laid plot for his ruin. Waldeck had a motive, too, in desiring to get rid of him. Under these circumstances he determined not to abide the combined action of conspiracy and partial justice. Trusting, therefore, in the future to redeem his name from infamy, he made his escape and folding his cloak closely around him he directed his steps toward Cambridge.

Waldeck's arguments were so strong that Colonel Powell yielded the claims of duty, and permitted the young patriot to depart unmolested.

CHAPTER V.
The Disclosure.

Amelia Powell had passed a night of the most painful anxiety. The sharer of her heart's fondest emotions had been banished from her presence—had been treated with the most undisguised contempt. To her devoted heart this was meet cause for sorrow. The future seemed shrouded in all its promised bliss and joy in gloomy forebodings upon her brightest hope.

Her father's gay and luxurious habits compelled her to mix with the light-hearted revellers in the saloons of fashion; but, deprived of her soul's ideal, it was distasteful in the extreme. Inheriting the temperance and disposition of a meek and gentle mother, her happiness consisted in the most simple enjoyments of life. The peaceful heaven of the fireside of home was more desirable than the giddy mazes of the dance, or the light revels of the drawing-room. The routine of fashionable dissipation to which her father was devoted, was a monotonous round of misery to her.

Her introduction to Robert Dewrie had been entirely accidental. She had met him scarcely a year before, in the revel of poverty, ministering to the wants of the suffering. Her heart sympathized with his in the mission of mercy. His manly form and handsome face, lighted by a bright intelligent eye, now beaming with gentle sympathy; his modest, graceful demeanor and respectful but earnest gaze of admiration he bestowed upon her—all had contributed to engage her heart. She was the name of the gentle girl had been invoked, she loved him. In her daily walks of charity she met him; occasionally he attended her home, and she learned to know his character and pursuits. The intelligence that he was one of the most devoted of the agitators of the day, which she had obtained through other sources, fell heavily upon her heart. This would exclude him from her father's sympathy; and she would be the dividing line between them. With much sympathy for the injured colonists she could not but esteem her friend more highly for his devotion to the welfare of his country. There was a Roman virtue in his composition which increased her admiration, and appealed more strongly to her affections.

Various opportunities for intercourse occurred, and at a fitting time, Robert Dewrie had unfolded his heart, and offered it on the shrine of her affections. The offering was not disdained, and the record of their devotion and the vows was witnessed above.

The storm of war seemed rapidly gathering over the colonies, and Robert Dewrie found himself more and more alienated from the sympathies and views of Col. Powell. It was a sad thought, but his soul was too elevated, his patriotism too noble, to be seduced from his duty even by the silken lure of love.

The young patriot's open heart could not conceal entirely the joys which animated it, and Waldeck was led to suspect the fact. By the adoption of a system of espionage, he had satisfied himself that Robert Dewrie was the rival most to be dreaded in his conquest of Amelia Powell's heart. On the preceding night he had followed him to Queen-street, and revealed to the astonished father the disagreeable truth, which had enabled him to surprise the lovers.

Amelia, with a sad heart, had seated herself in the sitting room. The book she held received no share of her attention. Her mind was overshadowed with anxiety for her lover. As she was thus pondering her clouded prospects, her father, who had just returned from the goldsmith's shop, entered the apartment. From the events of the previous night, she expected to be treated with cold sternness; but to her surprise, he greeted her with even more than usual gentleness, and imprinted a fatherly kiss of affection on her cheek.

"You look pale this morning, Amelia; you are ill?" said Col. Powell, in a low tone of solicitude, for whatever his faults, whatever the peculiarities of his nature, he loved his daughter, his only child, with an earnest devotion.

"No, father, I am quite well," replied Amelia, and the tears gathered in her eyes—her father's gentleness had melted her tender heart.

"What ails you, child? Why these tears?" and the fond father wiped away the reproaching drops.

"Forgive me, father; forgive me that I offended you last night."

"Nay, think no more of it, Amelia, forget him—he is unworthy of your love."

"Do not say so, father; I love him fondly, truly."

Colonel Powell was distressed to find that the affair of the previous evening, which he had interrupted, was not an idle flirtation, as he had anxiously hoped. He saw with the deepest solicitude the threads which a single night of sorrow had made. Whatever his own prejudices against the union of his daughter with a hot-headed rebel, the event was now rendered impossible by the infamy of the young patriot. His experience of woman's heart clearly indicated the danger of crossing a fond and tender affection like that of his beloved daughter.

"I trust, my child, you have not irrevocably bestowed your affection upon this young man," said Col. Powell, after a long pause, in which the painful realities of his daughter's position had rapidly flitted through his mind.

Amelia made no reply, but gazed with a look of impenetrable anxiety into the face of her father.

"You must forget him, Amelia; you must indeed; he is utterly unworthy of you," said Col. Powell, in a sorrowful tone.

"No, father, he is all that is manly, true, and just. I love him for his virtues, for his

honesty, for his pure and noble nature. You cannot know him, father; you are prejudiced against him," pleaded Amelia from the mine of tenderness in her heart.

"I grieve for you, my daughter; but recent events have disclosed his true character. If he were a different man, I might look with favor upon him."

"What do you mean, father? What recent events? Do you refer to the battle of Lexington? His heart is true to his country; if he is at fault, it is because he has been misguided. Do not condemn him for that."

"Alas, my child, he is even worse than a traitor to his country."

"Do not wound me with these dark words. Tell me all I know he is incapable of any baseness."

"Your heart deceives you, Amelia. The man you love is a murderer!"

"A murderer! no, father, no! You wrong him!" and the devoted girl clasped with convulsive energy the hand of her father.

"It is too true, my child—may God be merciful to you. Basely and cruelly Robert Dewrie has taken the life of his uncle."

The cheek of the stricken daughter blanched, and her frame trembled with the violence of her emotions. With painful effort she maintained her composure while Col. Powell narrated the revolting particulars of the tragedy at the goldsmith's. The suspicious circumstances which had criminated her lover, were placed in the most heart-rending minutest detail before her. But she still found and true refused to believe any ill of him, whose honor and happiness were all in all to her. With an inward determination to cling to him in his hour of peril, as she had when his sky had been comparatively bright; she heard the conclusion of the terrible relation. All this might have been the invention of his enemies. They might have conspired to ruin him. Yet with the evidence so palpably against him she could not realize the danger of his position—could not but recognize the possibility of his guilt.

"You see Amelia," continued Col. Powell, congratulating himself on the apparent fortitude with which his daughter had listened to his narration—"you see that Robert Dewrie even while he pressed you to his heart last night was a murderer; that his hand was stained with his uncle's blood."

"O, God! his bloody hand!" exclaimed she as the terrible incidents of the previous night rushed with appalling force to her mind, conveying the irresistible conclusion that her heart's idol was indeed a fiend.

Her delicate nerves, already strained to their utmost tension, could endure no more, and she sank fainting into the arms of her father.

CHAPTER VI.
The Interview.

Notwithstanding the political excitement that pervaded the town, the murder of the goldsmith created a great sensation. The circumstances which had criminated her lover, were deemed conclusive even by the young man's most intimate friends. Of his present retirement, nothing was known, and his escape and subsequent absence were regarded as but an admission of guilt. But as nothing further was ascertained in relation to the young man the excitement among the townsfolk gradually abated, and finally ceased altogether. Still there was one heart which yet bled with the wound it had caused—Amelia Powell refused to be comforted. Her affection was too deeply lacerated to be so easily or speedily healed. Her father by all the ingenuity of tenderness, strove to mitigate her sorrow; but in spite of all his exertions, she rapidly declined in health and spirits.

Mr. Waldeck was a constant visitor at the mansion of Col. Powell. His attentions to Amelia were more marked and persevering. Her father had gently intimated his wish that she should accept the hand of the indefatigable suitor, and the daughter with a desire to please him, had tolerated rather than accepted his addresses. To her the word seemed but a blank; she had nothing further to live for, but to make the happiness of her father. She reluctantly resigned the hope of ever meeting Robert again. He had deceived her as to his true character, and her heart was broken her affections were wrecked. Without any definite purpose of accepting his hand, Amelia had endeavored to regard without loathing, the man to whom her father wished to unite her. She was still true to the noble, beautiful idea of truth and goodness which she had embodied in the character of her lover. The veil was torn, but the ideal still existed in her heart.

About four weeks after the events related in the preceding chapters Waldeck was seated in the back parlor of his house. A flickering light threw its fitful rays on the large features of the goldsmith. He had grown paler and thinner than when he last saw her. He was uneasy and nervous, as he attempted with an unsteady hand to turn the leaves of an account book. Unable to fix his mind upon the business which claimed his attention he rose and paced the room. But a vision of horror continually haunted him. At length wearied with the turning presence of his own thoughts, he for whatever his faults, whatever the peculiarities of his nature, he loved his daughter, his only child, with an earnest devotion.

"Who's there?" exclaimed he in a sudden and nervous tone.

But no answer was returned. He searched the passage way without making any discovery. Ascending it to the doored state of his nerves, he entered his room and threw himself upon the bed. For an hour or more he tossed about, but sleep came not to him, until wearied beyond the hope of ever meeting Robert again. He had deceived her as to his true character, and her heart was broken her affections were wrecked. Without any definite purpose of accepting his hand, Amelia had endeavored to regard without loathing, the man to whom her father wished to unite her. She was still true to the noble, beautiful idea of truth and goodness which she had embodied in the character of her lover. The veil was torn, but the ideal still existed in her heart.

The candle still burned on the table, the sickly flame curling round the long wick, so that the room was but dimly lighted.

Noisily the door opened, and a man closely enveloped in a black cloak, entered the chamber. Cautiously he advanced to the bedside, and bent over the sleeper.

"It is true, old man, my blow was sure," muttered the sleeper in disjointed phrases, then turning on the bed he groaned heavily. For a time he lay in silence, as though his dream was ended.

The stranger listened awhile, and then snuffed the candle which was flickering as if going out. Again he approached the bedside, and again the sleeper turned into an uneasy posture.

"Awake, old man, awake! What if I did kill thee?" groaned he. "Off, off, unhand me!" and Waldeck started with convulsive energy from the bed and awoke.

He saw the form of a man, and it seemed the waking continuation of the dream.

"Off, off, man," screamed he, springing from the bed upon the form before him.

"Waldeck," said the stranger, as he flung his assassin coat from him—"Waldeck, are you

and? Rouse yourself."

"Ah!" said the goldsmith, "Robert is it possible you have dared to come here!"

"I dare! I come in the dead watches of the night for justice—for justice at your hands; deny me at your peril," said Robert Dewrie for it was he who had thus intruded into the chamber of the other.

"Why, Robert, I do not understand you."

"Understand me, villain! not a word of equivocation with me. Answer me this question. Where is the body of my uncle?"

"Robert Dewrie you are mad; these dark events have taken away your senses."

"Your subtleties shall not avail you—Here I am, hunted down as a murderer as a fiend; stigmatized wherever I go, and compelled to burrow in the woods, like a wild beast—and this for your crime."

"Do you mean to accuse me of the crime Robert?" said Waldeck, with the manner of an injured man. "Would you accuse me—me—when I have done everything to shield you from suspicion—and you owe me your present safety?"

"I accuse you. Why do you deny our interview on the night of the murder? You are not only an assassin, but a base and dastardly one—a double murderer, for you have accused an innocent man. Where is the body? Tell me, ere I strangle you, and the exasperated young man seized the goldsmith by the throat with a fury which threatened the literal execution of the threat.

"Unhand me, scoundrel, unhand me," said Waldeck, clucking under the pressure of the other's hand, and he drew from his pocket a short dagger. "Unhand me, Robert, or your blood shall be upon your own head."

A fierce struggle now ensued, in which Robert at bay by the dagger, was forced to relinquish his hold, after having received several slight wounds.

"Now, young man, if you have aught with me, say it quick and leave the house or I will consign you to the charge of the sentry," said Waldeck, when he had freed himself from the clutch of his desperate opponent.

"I came for Waldeck, for justice. I came to demand your uncle's honor. As I entered this room, I discovered that your slanders were untrue and disturbed. I listened and you confessed in your sleep the murder of your partner. My suspicions were confirmed, and I was overwhelmed with indignation at the baseness which could thus fasten the guilt of his own crime upon another. Mr. Waldeck, you are a murderer."

"I am ready to answer before a court of justice," replied Waldeck, trembling at the disagreeable intelligence. "But the words of a sleeper are not generally esteemed competent testimony."

"Before Heaven I will prove your crime."

"Why not before a more immediate tribunal?" said Waldeck with a labored sneer.

"It would not avail me after you have arranged every circumstance to my disadvantage. Leave you, Mr. Waldeck, in your guilt last night shall meet you—as He who is just, will see all meet again, where each shall appear as he is!" said Robert with an energy and an eloquence which thrilled the blood of his listener as he turned to depart.

"Say, Robert, I have never borne you any ill-will; I have done all I could to relieve you from the foul charge. Let us be friends," added Waldeck in a conciliatory tone.

"We never can be friends," answered Robert, sternly.

"But your patrimony is in the estate of your uncle, can I not make you some advances?"

"No! my patrimony shall be claimed in due time," and Robert Dewrie left the room.

On the stairs he paused to ascertain if he was followed. On satisfying himself that he was not he descended to the back parlor, where he seated himself. Reflecting upon the gloomy prospects which surrounded him, he spent an hour. Having thus assured himself that all was quiet in the house, he found the tinder box and lighted a candle. Proceeding through the shop, he raised the trap-door and descended to the cellar.

The object of his visit to the house of his late uncle was to obtain, if possible any clue which might lead to the discovery of the murdered. Everybody else had supposed him the assassin, and had taken no pains to look further into the matter. The unaccountable denial of Waldeck in relation to the interview on the night of the murder had awakened his suspicions—had revealed to him the plan of the murderer. Armed with these suspicions he had entered the house on the present occasion to explore the premises and have an interview with Waldeck.

With the most minute attention he examined every part of the cellar. He saw the black stains of blood, but nothing else appeared to throw light upon the foul transaction. Who the murderer was he alone knew, but there was not a particle of evidence to criminate him. On the contrary, every circumstance, from the sequel to the parable, tended to criminate him.

The present visit had confirmed his suspicion of Waldeck; but as he had obtained nothing by what he could make it appear to others, he left the house disappointed and in deep mental agony.

CHAPTER VII.
The Necromancer.

The large number of British officers quartered in Boston, at the time of our story, rendered the town one continued scene of gaiety and excitement. Theatrical representations were given by them in Faneuil Hall, and nightly the beauty and fashion of the place congregated to join in the merry dance. It was the last of the season, that a grand ball was given by one of the most distinguished officers of the army. The elite of the town were there and the light dance and the gay revel were proceeding with all the animation which the buoyant spirits of the guests could infuse.

A few days before, the garrison and citizens had been astonished by the advent of the great Rhabab-ben-abel, the celebrated Persian necromancer, astrologer, and fortune-teller. It was announced by the town crier that he could detail to the people, with surprising accuracy, their past, present, and future history; that he could predict with unerring certainty the character, station and fortune of unseen and unheard of husbands and wives; that he could project horoscopes, and, in fine, tell anything the people desired to know. The officers of the army regarded him as a fit subject for mirth, and, accordingly, they made good of him in the promotion of their enjoyment. He had astonished many of them by the relation of the past incidents of their lives, but even this failed with them to establish his reputation as a conjurer. He was invited to all the balls and parties, and proved to be a decided addition to the entertainments.

At the ball on the present occasion, Rhabab-ben-abel was one of the most prominent guests. He was dressed in full Persian costume, including the flowing robe and the lofty turban.

He was apparently a very aged man; his long white beard swept his chest, and his form was slightly bent. He was a stern looking man, his brow was wrinkled with a perpetual frown, and his voice harsh and grating.

Among the guests assembled were Col. Powell, his daughter and Waldeck. Amelia was an excellent fencer in the gay scene; devoted to her father alone made her consent to join in such festivities. She was still beautiful, still the belle of the town, but her heart was gloomy, and her spirit crushed. It was only by a strong effort of the will, that she appeared not wholly indifferent to the gaudy which surrounded her. Waldeck was as attentive as ever, hovering near her at every opportunity.

At each suspension of the dance, the astrologer was in great demand. With a mixture of dry humor and stern reserve in his manner, he related past histories, and predicted future destinies. He heeded not the merry peals of laughter which often followed his revelations; his whole attention was absorbed in the practice of his art. After supper, Colonel Powell with his daughter leaning on his arm, and followed by Waldeck, re-entered the hall which was comparatively empty. The renowned necromancer stood near the centre of the spacious floor, with his arms folded, gazing intently at the ceiling of the room.

"Let us consult the astrologer," suggested Colonel Powell, with a smile.

"By all means," added Waldeck. "No doubt he has our future destiny at his tongue's end."

Amelia tacitly consented, and the party approached the old Persian, who designed not to withdraw his eyes from the ceiling until addressed.

"Come, Mr. Astrologer, let us hear your sage predictions concerning our past and future," said Col. Powell.

The old man started, and with a profound salam, asked the officer for his hand. In his shrill, harsh tones, he related to Col. Powell the incidents of his life. Astonished and charged to hear his life thus minutely laid bare, he withdrew his hand and Waldeck pressed forward.

"Ha!" exclaimed the magician, as he examined the lines, and then cast a piercing glance into his face.

"Well, old conjurer, what do you see?" said Waldeck, as he observed the sudden start of Rhabab.

Drawing the goldsmith close to him, and placing the left hand upon the crown of his head, while the right still retained the hand of Waldeck, he whispered in his ear:

"There is blood in the past!"

Waldeck sprang from him as though bitten by a viper.

"What is the matter?" asked Col. Powell.

"Nothing, nothing," answered Waldeck, endeavoring to appear unconcerned, while his face was ghastly pale, and his knees trembled.

"Go on with your story then, old man, speak as you can hear."

"It is all nonsense. I want no more of it. It will do very well to frighten children," said Waldeck, with a forced laugh.

"Children of a large growth, I should think," said Colonel Powell, with a smile.

"Come, Amelia, give him your hand."

Amelia presented her hand, and the conjurer took it. It was a fair hand, and the old man might have been excused for the gentle pressure he bestowed upon it. Turning his gaze from the palm he laid for a moment regarded with intense scrutiny, he gazed into her face. Amelia was struck with his air and the apparent interest with which he viewed her. That gentle pressure of her hand seemed no part of the conjurer's trade, and her attention was riveted upon him.

"Fair maiden, I would not remind you of happier days," said he, in a lower tone than he was wont to speak, "but you ask the secrets of my art, and you must have them."

"You have said that I am to hear all," replied Amelia, with a smile of encouragement.

"You have been crossed in love."

"Amelia started, and her father would have drawn her away.

"Go on," said she, as her pale cheek lighted up with a crimson tint.

"Your former lover was cast off for a crime of which he is innocent."

"Speak louder old man," interrupted Col. Powell, approaching nearer.

"The future," continued the old man, heedless of the interruption, "is bright. You will marry him who stands by your side."

"Bravo!" shouted Colonel Powell. "This is a most wonderful man. I say, Mr. Rhabab-ben-abel, do you happen to know where any valuable gold mine is located? Give me the particulars, and you shall have half the profits."

"But the conjurer heeded not the Colonel's jest."

"Perhaps your list of sciences does not embrace geology," continued Colonel Powell.

"Aye, the secrets of the earth are known to me," replied the old man in a solemn tone.

The music now summoned the dancers to the floor; and Waldeck was obliged to leave the party and meet his engagements with a lady.

The conjurer retired to a corner of the room, followed by Colonel Powell and his daughter, who declined in joining in the next dance.

"I have lost a ring, Rhabab," said Amelia with a smile, and willing to prolong the adventure, "can you tell me where it is?"

"I can, lady. It was a valuable ring, as well as a curiously wrought one. It belonged to your mother, for whose sake, you esteem it more highly than all the riches of earth."

"I do, I do," exclaimed Amelia, forgetting in her interests, the juggling trade of the man who had just deceived her.

"But where is it, old man?" asked Colonel Powell, thoughtful as was his daughter, of the circumstances of the interview.

To the astonishment of the officer and his daughter, the astrologer related all the circumstances under which the ring had been lost.

"The murdered man removed the ring before his disappearance," said he, as he concluded his wonderful statement.

"Where is it then?"

"I cannot tell without consulting the stars!"

"Well, my man, here are the stars; look out this window and tell us all about it," said the Colonel, reminded by this mention of a trick of the craft, that astrology was a "de-funct science."

"Without my astrology?" said the old man, looking into the officer's face with a glance so unobscured as to half convince him that the astrologer was "no humbug" after all. "I will make a calculation to-night, and shall be able to answer your question to-morrow."

"Colonel Powell, a lady in the drawing-room desires to see you," said a waiter to the officer.

"Come Amelia."

"I will remain here; I'm interested in this man's art."

"Very well, I will return in a moment," and Col. Powell departed.

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"Amelia do you not know me?" said the astrologer, bending over her and speaking in a whisper.

"Know you! Good Heaven! who are you?" exclaimed the lady, looking at him with surprise.

"Speak low and do not start. I am Robert Dewrie—an innocent of the crime charged to me, as the angels of heaven."

"Robert! can it be? And Amelia, regardless of the caution, started back.

"Do not shrink from me. As God is my judge, I am innocent—it shall be proved, if you follow my directions."

"I will Robert, but I am so agitated I shall expose you."

"Be calm; advise your father to invite me to his house to-morrow morning. Here he comes."

"Yes, lady," continued he, as the Colonel, approached, "the stars rule the destiny of mankind. Zoroaster, Confucius, Foe—"

Here he was interrupted by Colonel Powell's good-natured ridicule. Amelia did as the conjurer had requested, and he was invited to be at the mansion the next morning with the calculations concerning the ring.

A halo of hope was shed over the path of Amelia, and that night her prayer ascended that Robert might redeem his promise to establish his innocence.

CHAPTER VIII.
The Ring.

Rhabab-ben-abel, agreeably to his appointment, was at the mansion of Col. Powell on the following morning, but the officer had not yet returned from his customary military duties. Amelia was alone.

"The stars are favorable," said the conjurer, as Amelia entered the apartment in which he had been waiting. "The issue that had before wrangled his brow was not there, and a smile, the first he had been seen to indulge, played about his long white beard as he took her hand. Venus is in the ascendant."

"Oh, Robert, Robert, are you indeed innocent of this awful crime?" said Amelia, after an affectionate salutation.

"As innocent as you are, Amelia, whose gentle nature shrinks from the thoughts of crime," replied he; "can you not believe me?"

"Oh, yes, Robert, but how cruelly this event has lacerated my heart. Thank God, you are innocent; I shall believe you."

"Bless you, Amelia; I could have borne all with fortitude but your dejection," said he with a fervent pressure of her hand.

"You must acknowledge that the circumstances very strongly implicate you," added Amelia, with an air of hesitation.

"They do, very strongly; and wonder not that even you should not credit them."

"Oh, Robert, I needed nothing till the thought of your bloody hand came to my remembrance. On the very night of the murder you remember your hand was stained with blood. Against my reason alone, I refused to believe you guilty, till this appalling circumstance led me to the terrible conclusion. But you cannot blame me?"

"No, Amelia; the evidence was enough to have convinced a saint, much more an erring creature like myself. That stain on my hand was given me by Mr. Waldeck, and the disguised young man related the particulars of his interview with that person on the night of the murder, describing how Waldeck had shaken hands with him, and thus imparted the ominous stains. The other particulars, including his mid-night visit to the goldsmith, were all detailed."

Amelia was satisfied. If her affections had not prejudiced her in his favor, she could not but have noticed the impress of truth which was graven on his manner, and fixed to his statement. She was again happy. The terrible load which had oppressed her heart was removed. The trials, the dangers, the doubt, that attended her future course, were all unheeded. She was convinced of her lover's innocence, and she was happy again, in permitting her affections to wander back into the old channel. They could love each other; and what if difficulties, separation, even death awaited them, they could still rejoice in their mutual fidelity.

"Throw off this disguise, Robert; my father, for my sake, will not gain spurn you," said Amelia.

"Nay, dearest, I fear your father would not give the same credence to my statements that the ear of affection has given. I must yet prove my innocence. I must bring the real murderer to light, for whose sake, he could not but have noticed the impress of truth which was graven on his manner, and fixed to his statement. She was again happy. The terrible load which had oppressed her heart was removed. The trials, the dangers, the doubt, that attended her future course, were all unheeded. She was convinced of her lover's innocence, and she was happy again, in permitting her affections to wander back into the old channel. They could love each other; and what if difficulties, separation, even death awaited them, they could still rejoice in their mutual fidelity."

"I fear I should not have the courage to confront a murderer."

"My life depends upon you. He is not a cunning man, and will produce the ring."

Hush, here is my father," said Amelia, as she heard the door open.

The room resumed its sway on the conjurer's brow, and he was again the same stern, immovable old man, he had been in the ball-room.

"The celestial sciences, lady is as old as the world. The ancient kings of Persia, of Syria, of Egypt, all encouraged it, and the most renowned men of antiquity devoted all their talents to the divination of it."

"So, Mr. Rhabab what's your name, you are punctual to your appointment," said Colonel Powell, as the soothsayer broke off his sentence and made a profound obeisance to him.

"The stars always meet at appointed times; they are my mentors."

"You are a star yourself, perhaps. But, what of the ring?"

"The night was cloudy and the stars were hid from my vision," said the conjurer with stately emphasis, "when the veil is removed the secret shall be revealed."

"Bah!" exclaimed the Colonel. "But tell me, old man, where you picked up the incidents of my past life?"

Rhabab-ben-abel pointed upward, but vouchsafed no other reply.

"No doubt of it," said the Colonel, with a light laugh.

Some further conversation took place, after which the astrologer took his leave, and heeded less of the shoutings of a group of little vagabonds, whose minds contained but little reverence for the occult sciences, he wended his way to Hanover street, in which was located the sanctuary of his incantations. Here he found a crowd of men and women who had congregated to ascertain the ups and downs which the future had in store for them. But the astrologer, with dignified reserve, informed them that the stars were unfavorable, and dismissed them without displaying any of his wonderful wisdom. Seating himself in an easy chair, he relaxed the frown, and turned his attention to the consideration of sublimity things.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)